

# CHECKLIST FOR REVIEWING COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

This checklist is a guide to the most important fish/wildlife-related topics that must or should be covered in a comprehensive plan. Some topics are *GMA requirements* (marked with \*\*\*) and must be in the plan. Other topics are based on *DCTED's Procedural Criteria* (marked with \*\*); these should be included, but they are not necessarily required. Finally, some topics are based on *WDFW recommendations* (marked with \*); these are also not required but should be considered in order to effectively address fish and wildlife issues in the comprehensive plan.

## 1. Land Use and Critical Area Issues

The land use element is the heart of the comprehensive plan. If the jurisdiction does not elect to include an optional element dealing with critical areas, the land use element will be the most important part of the plan regarding fish and wildlife resources.

- \*\* \_\_\_\_ Does the plan show the locations and estimated quantity of critical areas?
- \*\* \_\_\_\_ Does the plan designate and protect critical areas wherever they exist, within & outside UGAs?
- \* \_\_\_\_ Does the plan incorporate, or at least reference, the Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) program?
- \* \_\_\_\_ Is prevention of habitat fragmentation included in the plan as a means and/or a goal regarding the protection of critical fish & wildlife areas? Avoiding the creation of isolated subpopulations and creating a habitat system with connections between larger habitat blocks are suggested in DCTED's minimum guidelines.
- \* \_\_\_\_ Is the retention of large blocks of habitat included in the plan as a means and/or a goal regarding the protection of critical fish & wildlife areas? Fish and wildlife need more than just critical areas for their survival; many also depend on commercial forest lands, rural areas, rangeland, and open space. Planners and elected officials should be cognizant of the multiple functions of these areas.
- \*\* \_\_\_\_ Does the plan show the locations and estimated quantity of natural resource lands (i.e., forest, agricultural, and mineral lands)?
- \* \_\_\_\_ Have appropriate natural resource lands been designated in the plan? This will usually be applied to counties. Some jurisdictions may be reluctant to designate forest, mineral, and agricultural resource lands because such lands would then be off-limits to land conversion and development. The measure of "appropriateness" is subjective, but should generally be based on existing land uses and the amount of land beyond that needed for population increases over the next 20 years.
- \*\*\* \_\_\_\_ Does the plan adequately coordinate with other jurisdictions regarding important fish and wildlife resources that cross political boundaries? Comp plan coordination between

jurisdictions with common borders is a GMA requirement. This provision will often involve resources that occupy large areas, such as riparian areas, migration corridors, winter ranges, etc.

\*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the plan review [or state the intention to review] designations and regulations to ensure consistency? This will probably not occur until the final development regulations are adopted.

\*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan show an assessment of whether projected growth can be achieved within capacities of available land and water and without environmental degradation? The assessment of growth capacity within available land should be relatively easy to do; however, the assessment of environmental degradation is likely to be glossed over or left to interpretation from the discussions of open space, critical areas, etc.

### *Open Space*

\*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the plan include the general distribution of land for open space?

\*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the plan identify greenbelts, open space, and open space corridors within and between urban growth areas, including lands useful for wildlife and for the connection of critical areas?

\*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan show the locations and estimated quantity of greenbelts, open space, and open space corridors? [Is it sufficient, or are there other important areas that are potentially open space areas?]

\*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the designation of open space incorporate important fish and wildlife habitat? Ideally, the open space plan will include PHS mapped information.

### *Water*

\*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the plan review flooding, storm water run-off?

\*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan address water pollution problems, especially interjurisdictional?

\*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the plan provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering the Sound? Reference should be made to the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority plan in appropriate jurisdictions.

\* \_\_\_ Is protection given to hydrologic regimes, water quality, and adjacent upland areas of freshwater and near-shore marine areas?

## **2. Rural Issues** (This section will apply to counties rather than cities/towns.)

- \*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the plan permit land uses that are compatible with the rural character and provide for a variety of rural densities? Although this is somewhat subjective, density greater than one unit per 2.5 acres may not be rural in character.
- \*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan adopt policies regarding preservation of critical areas, programs to control non-point sources of water pollution, and programs to preserve and enhance habitat for fish & wildlife in rural areas? Protection of critical areas is a GMA requirement, and designation/protection of critical areas wherever they exist is a DCTED Procedural Criteria recommendation.
- \* \_\_\_ Does planning for rural areas include retention of forest and agricultural lands in addition to those classified as resource lands? Fish and wildlife need more than just critical areas for their survival; many also depend on forest lands and other kinds of open space in rural areas.
- \*\*\*\_\_\_ Is the rural element consistent with any element (e.g., land use, environmental, or critical area element) that may discuss Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Internal consistency is a GMA requirement.

## **3. Housing Issues**

- \*\* \_\_\_ Is the housing element consistent with any element (e.g., land use, environmental, or critical area element) that may discuss Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Internal consistency is a GMA requirement.

## **4. Transportation Issues**

- \*\* \_\_\_ Is the transportation element consistent with any element (e.g., land use, environmental, or critical area element) that may discuss Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Internal consistency is a GMA requirement.

## **5. Utilities Issues**

- \* \_\_\_ Do on-site sewage treatment systems adequately protect critical areas, including Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Most jurisdictions are likely to overlook this; it should be included as a matter of completeness and internal consistency. The comprehensive plan may state this as a policy, with buffer distances and other provisions stated in the development regulations. Monitoring and repair of failed systems should be addressed in the plans/regulations.
- \*\*\*\_\_\_ Is the utility element consistent with any element (e.g., land use, environmental, or critical area element) that may discuss Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Internal consistency is a GMA requirement.

## **6. Siting Commercial, Industrial, and Essential Public Facilities**

- \*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the siting of essential public facilities adequately protect critical areas, including Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Internal consistency is a GMA requirement.
- \*\*\*\_\_\_ Does the siting of commercial/industrial developments adequately protect critical areas, including Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas? Internal consistency is a GMA requirement, and protection of critical areas wherever they exist is a DCTED Procedural Criterion. This item may be stated as policy in the Land Use element. Even better, areas designated for such developments may be shown on a map, along with an inventory of critical areas. In addition, critical area regulations should have adequate provisions regarding buffers, compatible land uses, mitigation, etc.

## 7. Other

- \*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan show how it addresses GMA statutory goals?
- \*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan show how county-wide policies have been integrated into the plan?
- \*\* \_\_\_ Does the plan show a future land use map?
- \*\* \_\_\_ Are comprehensive plans consistent with existing state regulations, including the Bald Eagle Protection Rules (WAC 232-12-292), eggs and nests of protected wildlife (RCW 77.16.120) and Hydraulic Project Approvals (RCW 75.20.100)? DCTED Procedural Criteria state that local jurisdictions and state agencies with regulatory authorities not specifically repealed or amended by the GMA should work together toward producing a single harmonious body of law.
- \* \_\_\_ Does the plan foster a cooperative working relationship between the Department of Fish and Wildlife and the local jurisdiction in the development and implementation of comprehensive plans and regulations? This is based on the fact that this agency has recognized expertise to carry out its mandate to protect fish and wildlife resources.
- \* \_\_\_ Does the plan provide for innovative land use management techniques? (GMA recommendation) Innovative techniques may include clustering, provisioning of open space, purchase or transfer of development rights, conservation easements, open space tax incentives, etc.